

RESOLUTION 13-133

WHEREAS, the City Council and the Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, are pleased to honor Dr. James Ira Dawson during Black History Month, 2013. Dr. Dawson was the first African American to serve on the Huntsville City School Board, and was all about championing storms for others. He was a voice of equality and justice for all, spoke when no one else would speak and stood when no one else would stand; and,

WHEREAS, James Ira Dawson was born the third child of the late Jesse and Charlotte Dawson on January 14, 1925, in Pike County, Alabama and at the age of 84 passed from his earthly home December 8, 2009. Jesse and Charlotte Dawson preceded their son in death as did his three siblings, Minnie Dukes, Thomas Edwards Dawson and Johnny Lee Dawson. Dr. Dawson leaves behind a loving wife of 69 years; a daughter, Delarise Hamilton, and a surrogate son and daughter, Erskine L. and Georgia Valrie, all of Huntsville; one granddaughter, Angela D. Wilkins and her husband, Mark Wilkins; three great grandchildren, Mariah Janae, Miles James and Melanie Jade; and,

WHEREAS, growing up in Alabama, Dr. Dawson received his high school degree from Helicon High School. He earned his B.S. degree in Agriculture from Alabama A&M College, Normal, Alabama in 1953. Dr. Dawson continued studying at Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama and acquired a M.Ed degree in Agriculture. He was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in Agriculture from Pennsylvania State University. He later earned an A.S. degree in Mortuary Science from Jefferson State Community College in Birmingham, Alabama; and,

WHEREAS, James Dawson was honorably discharged February 3, 1946, from the U.S. Army. He served in Burma during World War II, and his decorations included three Battle Stars, a Presidential Citation and a Good Conduct Medal; and,

WHEREAS, at a very early age he placed his hope in Christ and joined Kings Chapel AME Church in Luverne, Alabama. Upon establishing permanent residency in Huntsville, he and his wife, Gloria, united with St. John's AME Church under the pastoral leadership of Dr. Homer L. McCall. While at St. John's, he served as a Steward and prayer warrior. Later, they joined Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church under the pastoral leadership of Dr. O. Wendell Davis, where Dr. Dawson attended faithfully until his health failed and he could no longer attend active service; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Dawson was a member of several professional organizations and served as consultant and evaluator for numerous 1890 land-grant institutions, Cooperative Extension and Cooperative State Research Programs throughout the United States. In the political arena, some of his extensive service included District 1 Representative on the Huntsville City School Board of Education where he was elected five times; Board of Directors, Alabama Democratic Party; member of New South Coalition; past chairperson, Huntsville-

Madison County Democratic Conference; member, National Committee to re-elect Bill Clinton for President; and past president of the Huntsville-Madison County NAACP; and,

WHEREAS, James Dawson's social, civic and community affiliations were numerous and legendary. He served as a member of Huntsville Manpower Planning Council, American County Life Association, Huntsville Model Cities, North Alabama Rural Development Council, National Education Association, Alabama Education Association and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. In recognition of his service to humanity, he received scores of plaques, citations and commendations. Among his most treasured included the naming of the J.O. Johnson High School Auditorium in his honor and Resolution HJR77, passed by the Alabama House of Representatives on April 25, 1991, naming the three-story Cooperative Extension Building at Alabama A&M University the "James I. Dawson Cooperative Extension Building." After his death, West Mastin Lake Elementary School in Huntsville was renamed the James I. Dawson Elementary School on May 20, 2012. He also treasured the appointment by President Bill Clinton via the Secretary of Agriculture to serve as one of five state committee persons to administer USDA Policy regarding the crop, livestock and Farm Loan Program in Alabama; and,

WHEREAS, serving almost 20 years on the City Board of Education representing District 1 in northwest Huntsville, Dr. Dawson was a self-proclaimed "bush shaker," standing up for what he believed in. Some thought he was abrupt at times, but admitted he had a servant's heart. He was an outspoken champion for diversity. Dr. Dawson once commented: "If people don't like equality and justice, they can't like me." James Dawson filled an important role in making the Huntsville school system a quality system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council and Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama express special thanks and salute the awesome legacy of Dr. James Ira Dawson for his dedicated service and untiring effort to make Huntsville a better community. It is a pleasure to honor his memory during Black History Month, 2013, acknowledging his being the first African American to serve on the City of Huntsville's School Board.

ADOPTED on this the 28th day of February, 2013.

President of the City Council of the
City of Huntsville, Alabama

APPROVED on this the 28th day of February, 2013.

Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama